



CHINA DESIGN NOW

Sponsored by HSBC

15 March to 13 July 2008

The V&A's spring exhibition, China Design Now, will be the first in the UK to explore the recent explosion of new design in China and the first to attempt to understand the impact of rapid economic development on architecture and design in China's major cities. From the 2008 Olympic stadium, and other significant architectural projects, to the latest in fashion and graphics, China Design Now captures a dynamic phase as China opens up to global influences and responds to the hopes and dreams of its new urban middle class.

The exhibition will focus on three rapidly expanding cities – Beijing, Shanghai and Shenzhen. It will display the work of Chinese and international designers, focussing on architecture, fashion and graphic design as well as film, photography, product and furniture design, youth culture and digital media. Around 100 designers are featured, more than ninety five per cent of whom are Chinese.

Mark Jones, Director of the V&A, said: "China is now the world's biggest market for mobile phones and is set to overtake the United States as the second biggest consumer of luxury goods after Japan. At the same time, there is more construction in China than anywhere else. The tremendous pace of change has inspired a whole new generation of designers and architects who are shaping fashion, product and urban design in China's big cities. We need to understand what is happening in China and the aim of this exhibition is to help people to get a snapshot of the development of design in today's China."

Exhibition highlights include:

- China's major Olympic architectural projects – designs include the National Stadium in Beijing (the 'birds nest') by Herzog & de Meuron as well as Digital Beijing, the information centre by Chinese architect Zhu Pei;
- The China Central Television (CCTV) headquarters by Rem Koolhaas and Ole Scheeren (OMA);
- Foster + Partners' design for the new Capital Airport extension in Beijing;
- Projects by China's leading young architects – including Ma Yansong, Wang Hui, Atelier Deshaus and standardarchitecture;
- Graphic design from the last two decades showing China's post-Mao design pioneers and new generations of designers experimenting with the latest technologies and global design trends;
- Products aimed at China's design conscious youth - album covers, skateboards, designer toys, mobile phones, t-shirts and trainers;
- Fashion by some of China's leading designers such as Han Feng, Lu Kun, Ma Ke, Wang Yiyang and Zhang Da – from designs evoking 1930s Shanghai chic to avant-garde style;
- Commune by the Great Wall, a boutique spa hotel on the Great Wall of China comprising twelve pavilions designed by Asian architects;
- The recent wave of creative consumer and lifestyle magazines;
- Private and government initiated housing projects for the affluent middle classes such as 'Thames Town' outside Shanghai, a recreation of a small English town;
- Photography, furniture and fashion inspired by the revival of 1930s Shanghai glamour;
- Photographs from the Great Family Aspirations series by Weng Fen and the Shanghai Living series by Hu Yang, documenting the living rooms of Shanghai residents from the newly wealthy to migrants to the city.

The exhibition will be in three sections and is structured round the idea of a journey from south to north along China's east coast through Shenzhen (China's manufacturing capital with a population whose average age is younger than 30) to Shanghai and Beijing. Each city is a starting point for the exploration of different design fields – graphic design and visual culture in Shenzhen (where China's contemporary graphic design movement started), fashion and lifestyle in Shanghai, and architecture and the city in Beijing.

The displays examine China's hopes and dreams – from the entrepreneurial spirit of individual designers, to society's aspirations at a moment of tremendous change, to the global ambitions of a nation. China Design Now places exhibits in the context of China's social, cultural and economic reforms over the last 25 years, providing both a critical survey and a narrative that enables visitors to see how China's new design and consumer culture has developed, what its driving forces are and where it is going.

China Design Now will include case studies of influential individuals, companies and organisations that have played an important role in shaping aspirations in today's China. They include Yue-Sai Kan who launched one of the first cosmetics companies in China; Wong Kar Wai, the director of the film *In the Mood for Love* that inspired renewed nostalgia in China for the glamour, romance and fashions of Shanghai of the 1930s; Chen Yifei, one of China's most commercially successful artists as well as influential entrepreneur; and SOHO China, a leading private land development company.

The exhibition has been curated by Zhang Hongxing and Lauren Parker of the V&A after four years of research involving close collaboration with institutions and individuals in China.

Lauren Parker said: "This exhibition captures an extraordinary moment in Chinese design and the rise of China's consumer society. There is truly a sense of design frenzy in China right now."

Zhang Hongxing said: "Design in China's cities has changed beyond all recognition in the last two decades. This is a moment when you can start talking about things being designed in China, not just made in China. The designers included in China Design Now are pioneers for future generations who will bring Chinese design to an international audience."

The exhibition has been designed by Tonkin Liu, an award-winning architecture firm based in London.

Notes to Editors

- China Design Now is at the V&A from 15 March to 13 July 2008.
- There will be a joint Kings College/ V&A international conference alongside this exhibition on 6 and 7 June at Kings College, London.
- For further information on the book accompanying the exhibition, contact Julie Chan by calling 020 7942 2701 or 07747 607 822 or email j.chan@vam.ac.uk
- For further information on China Design Now merchandise accompanying the exhibition, please contact Lee Kendall on 020 7942 2681 or email l.kendall@vam.ac.uk
- General enquiries 020 7942 2000 or visit www.vam.ac.uk
- The exhibition is part of China Now, the 2008 UK festival bringing together events and displays of Chinese culture and sport. For more information, visit www.chinanow.org.uk

Ticket Information

- Tickets in person at the V&A – in advance or on day of visit – £8
(concessions: senior citizens £6; students, 12-17 year olds, ES-40 holders £4)
Family tickets: 2 adults and 2 12 to 17 year olds - £20 or 1 adult and 2 12 to 17 year olds - £12
Joint ticket with Thomas Hope £10, £8, £6
- For advance telephone and online bookings (booking fee applies) call 0870 906 3883 or visit www.vam.ac.uk

High resolution images are available to download from www.image.net.

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